1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Tributes could be quite large; there are records of payments from Kanem to Bornu in the sixteenth century that mention amounts of 1000 head of cattle per year.

Along with taxation and other demands such as annual military service, there was a system of exemption whereby persons or groups were released from their obligations to the state in return for some service—usually prayers and other religious duties. These exemptions, *Mabram*, were made by royal declaration in writing which stipulated that facets of a person's obligation were henceforward considered to be *haram* or forbidden, like the eating of pork. One of the oldest of these, given to the family of Umme Jilma, declares that the family is forever exempt from (a) entertaining the king's men during the dry-season military and tax collection campaigns, (b) from *diya* or blood compensation for injuries inflicted on others by accident, and (c) all forms of tribute and taxes. In time, however, all these exemptions were often honored more in the breach or renegotiated. Thus one sixteenth-century monarch ordered a large group to go to war. These people promptly refused on the basis of a *Mabram* given them by a previous ruler. When the king insisted, the entire group prepared to leave his kingdom. However a compromise was worked out in which they accepted military service and paid practically no taxes. This very same group is mentioned again in the traditions at the beginning of the nineteenth century when Shehu Laminu ruled that their exemptions should pertain only to the leaders of the group, not the entire set of male line descendants of the original holders of this privilege, who by this time had become a very large population.

In its apogee during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Bornu kingdom was an expansionist power, and warfare was the state function par excellence. According to traditions and written records, as many as seven or eight military campaigns a year were not uncommon; this meant an expedition might leave Bornu every six or eight weeks during the dry season. With so much militarism the techniques of warfare elaborated accordingly. From at least the sixteenth century onward, Bornu imported muskets, swords, chain mail which were vital and ancient parts of the Saharan trade, although such armaments were also manufactured by Bornu craftsmen as well.

The army itself was organized into regiments, representing a local area or an ethnic group under their own leaders, and they went into battle according to a well laid out military strategy. Campaigns were amost always conducted against walled towns. The shield bearers advanced first; then after it was felt that the poison arrows of the enemy were exhausted, the rest of the army would advance either storming the walls or forcing the town dwellers to come out and fight—whereupon muskets and cavalry were used. Generally speaking open encounters were quite unusual; the Bornu army was large, well disciplined, and well equipped, while the town dwellers were weak in all these respects and would usually try to flee once the siege went against them. Fallen towns were then mercilessly looted and the inhabitants killed or enslaved.

After the campaign and the distribution of booty by the leaders, the army disbanded. Leaders of various territorial ethnic groups swore allegiance to the king and arranged for the next campaign to be held so many days hence. At that time, criers were sent around to local markets stating the date and place of rendezvous for the army. Able bodied men were expected to go or send a representative bear-

175 567 839 complex of empire since slaves, along with gold, ivory, and ostrich feathers, had been traded for centuries across the Sahara and fed into Mediterranean markets. Slaves were obtained by raiding the pagan peoples who inhabited the upland areas to the south and southeast of Bornu.

175 636 Throughout this time the Hausa people, immediately to the west of the Kanuri, were under the suzerainty of the empire of Bornu. Though the Hausa are much more numerous than the Kanuri, their level of political development had not advanced beyond city-states, which were under the control of the unified and 175 167 powerful Bornu empire. The gradual entry of the Fulani into the area eventually led to the downfall of the domination of Bornu over the Hausa states. The Fulani are a nomadic cattle people deriving from the Atlantic coast area to the distant west. By the early part of the nineteenth century, drifting continuously to the east, they had become numerous in Hausa 175 territory. In 1804 the Fulani, under Usuman dan Fodio, rose • 721 up in holy war and gained control over the Hausa city states. They succeeded in sacking and destroying Birni Ngazargamu, and were finally repelled when the Kanuri rulers obtained assistance from the Kanembu to the north.

175 439 The inability of the Bornu empire to resist Fulani attacks was an indication of its decline and decay, and this in turn was the result of a much larger historical process: the decline in importance of the western Sudan and the development of the coastal areas of West Africa. Whereas the Sudanese states had

2. Slaves.

565 Royalty, by virtue of their close kinship with the Shehu,
354 fall into a distinct category in Kanuri society. For some, the kinship terminology takes the form of a title (Maina = prince), others are granted royal titles by the Shehu (Gumsu). Nobility represent a second category, composed of those titled freemen who trace no relationship to the Shehu. Here the titles are all conferred by the Shehu to a member of a household, who becomes the head of that household upon receiving the title.
567 Since the Kanuri recognize a category of slaves, they should be
565 distinguished as a separate segment of the population. However, they do not form the bottom-most stratum of Kanuri society, as might be supposed. On the contrary, just as freemen are stratified into nobility and commoners, so too can slaves be considered as a vertical segment of Kanuri society, falling into numerous stratified layers within the category called "slave."

567 The principles governing slavery in Kanuri society must now be considered so that the above view of the position of the slave can be properly understood. A Moslem may not enslave another Moslem, so that slaves can be taken only from pagan
175 peoples. In former times slaves were captured by raiding parties
567 who drove into pagan territory, sacked and burned villages, and
721 brought back captives who became slaves of Kanuri masters, either of the Shehu himself, or of officers of the army. Slaves were most frequently taken by the Kanuri from among the Marghi, to the south; from the tribes of the Gwoza hills; from the neigh-

175 borhood of the Shari river, south and east of Bornu; and the
567 lands east of the Shari. Of course, only pagan areas were
[72] raided.

Pagan peoples, on being captured in slave raids, remained with their Kanuri masters. As noted above, captured slaves belonged to either the Shehu (or the Mai in olden times), or to officers of the army, who invariably were titled nobles, and kabuna of the Shehu. However, Kabuna of the Shehu might be freemen or might themselves be slaves of the Shehu. In either case they could own slaves, so that it was possible for a slave to have slaves himself. In fact, a slave of the Shehu might own a slave, who in turn had a slave. In a legal sense, the owner of the first slave owned all the others, so that the Shehu owned all slaves of his slaves.

Although a Moslem may not enslave another Moslem, it is proper for a Moslem to own another Moslem as slave. Pagan slaves taken by Kanuri masters learned Kanuri culture, and their children grew up speaking only the Kanuri language and considered themselves Kanuri. They also became Moslems, but continued to remain slaves. This is in order, since one may not capture another Moslem, but one is not obliged to free a slave who converts to Islam. The slave of course has no jili since his ancestors were originally pagan (kərdi).

567 The hierarchy with respect to slaves is determined by sev-
554 eral factors. The first is whether the individual, and his descendants, are slaves of the Shehu or the slaves of a noble

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642 However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the 15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali Ghajideni (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly [103] in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Ye [361] (Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and Geidam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province. [648] His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north- [721] east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Borku and Tibesti in the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire 175 of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portugese cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma, for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe sometime around the beginning of the 17th century.(1) It is Idris who is supposed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area. However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century.(2)

[721] When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fighting increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have 174 fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.
(2) Bovill, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, p. 73

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paid tribute to imperial Bornu, although very often the Songhai would extend themselves and the Hausa would face around for a short while to bow to the suzerainty of Timbuctu.(1) Kanuri power also extended up into the Fezzan taking in the important salt works of Bilma. In the east, Bornu hegemony probably reached into the Darfur region and in the south to the present town of Biu in south Bornu.(2)

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From this pinnacle of majesty at the beginning of the 17th century a slow decline ensued which continued from the time of the 55th Mai, Muhammed (1602-1618 A.D.), son of Mai Idris Alooma, through the 18th century until the collapse of the second Kanuri empire in 1808. Although none of the writers are agreed on the causes of this decline it is possible that the monarchy and the court life had become so overly elaborate and ritualized, that it hampered the operation of effective leadership in a state requiring constant vigilance and warfare for its survival. It is reported that throughout almost the entire 18th century, the Mais rarely, if ever, left the confines of the palace during their reigns.(3) Traditions during this period tell of famines and pious leadership, rather than administrative and military successes.

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From about the 14th century onwards a nomadic cattle people, the Fulani, had been filtering into the Sudan from the northwest and slowly moving across the whole of what is today Northern Nigeria. In February of 1804, for a number of political and religious reasons, a Fulani religious leader, Othman dan Fodio, declared a Hejira, or Flight from Digal (evil), which was an expression of defiance and aggression towards the Hausa leaders. From this period forward he and his warrior-scholar son, Bello, carried on a holy war in the Sudan that resulted finally in an empire

(1) Shaw, F. L. (Lady Lugard), op. cit. p. 279
(2) Arkell, A.J. The History of Darfur; Sudan Notes and Records, Vol. 33 p. 246.
(3) Stenning, D. Nomads of the Great Forest (Ms.) 1955

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14

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with its center at Sokoto. The Fulani who had settled in Bornu were encouraged to rise up and support the war, and soon Bornu felt the onslaught of Fulani forces. In 1804-5, Kano sent for help to its suzerain state of Bornu and a Kanuri force was dispatched to aid the vassal in quelling the revolt. This relief force was soundly beaten by the insurgents and Kano fell under the rule of the Fulani. These and other early successes encouraged the Bornu Fulani who began organizing their revolt in Western Bornu and declaring themselves openly for Othman dan Fodio. We still have letters from this period sent back and forth between the Fulani and the Kanuri. The Kanuri scribes write of the attack as an outrage since it is a holy war against themselves, true believers, while the Fulani write of cruel and pagan practices being carried out in Bornu which must be cleansed. However the political nature of the campaign was obvious to all concerned, as it is to us in retrospect.(1) In 1808, a Fulani chief, Gwoni Muhktar, organized a force and moved against Birni Gazargamo, the ancient capital. It was taken and sacked. Some 44 years later in 1852, Barth met a man in Bornu who had been in the old capital on the day it fell. According to this report the attack was quite sudden and very little opposition was offered. The King and his courtiers left hurriedly by the east gate, while the Fulani entered the west gate in triumph.

An appeal for help was sent to a Kanemi Sheikh, Mohammad el Aminu, who with the help of Kanembu and Shuwa Arabs, had prevented Fulani risings on the western and northern shores of Lake Chad.(2) El Aminu or Laminu as he is remembered today sent his son and a force to help the Kanuri and nine months after the capital had fallen it was retaken. Laminu wrote

(1) Bovill, E.W. The Golden Trade of the Moors, (London) 1958, p. 230, feels that this Fulani expansion was primarily a religious movement. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that the end result of the Holy War was the Fulani Empire of Sokoto.

(2) A tribal leader from Kanem, the territoy north and northeast of Lake Chad.

175 to Bello and complained that violence was being used for political
721 aggrandizement, not religious conversion. Bello replied that the attacks were justified because of the oppression of the Fulani in Bornu, and the heathen practices of the Kanuri people, and because of aid given by Bornu to Kano and Katsina to resist the holy war.

Between 1809 and 1811 the capital fell again to the Fulani and was retaken a second time by Laminu for the Kanuri, but it was aban-
175 doned from this time forward as the center of the Bornu state. The results
178 of these few years were cataclysmic for the history of Bornu. The Fulani
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643 invasion was halted, although the western vassals were now under the sovereignty of the Fulani Empire of Sokoto. Bornu had survived the Jihad (holy war), but at the cost of her famous capital of Birni Gazargamo, and the loss of a dynasty of rulers, the Magumi Sefuwa, who had retained the monarchy for 1000 years. For in appealing to Laminu for help, the Kanuri Mai triggered off the beginning of his and his family's end as the effective monarchs of Bornu, meanwhile initiating the beginning of the Kanembu dynasty which sits on the Bornu throne today.

175 The traditional Mai set up a new capital, called Kafela (open
643 place) near the present town of Monguno, and Laminu resided for a while at
[103] nearby Ngomo on the shores of Chad. However the constant threat of inun-
[361] dation from the Lake forced him to move his headquarters further inland to
[721] Kuka which became the 19th century center of the Bornu state. Ruling from behind the scenes, with the Mai still on the throne as a puppet, Laminu tried to re-consolidate the kingdom from 1820-35, by recapturing the western vassals, and even at one point (1826) by menacing Kano. It was during this period that Denham and Clapperton visited Bornu and in their publications we have a good record of the contemporary court life and politics of the kingdom, as well as some glimpses into the nature of everyday life in

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643 Bornu in the 1820's. (1)

In 1835 Shehu Laminu retired and his son Umar (1835-1880) took over the effective headship of the Bornu state. Like his father, he attempted to maintain and expand the kingdom, while keeping the old Mai on the throne. During one of Umar's western campaigns against Zinder, the puppet Mai, Ibrahim appealed to Wadai for help in restoring him as the rightful ruler of Bornu against the Kanembu Shehu who had usurped the power. Umar returned from his Zinder campaign to find himself being attacked from the east by Wadai. Hearing of the Mai's instigation of this aggression, Umar put the puppet ruler in irons and tried to fight the Wadai forces at Logone, south of Lake Chad, but he was soundly defeated. Kuka was sacked, and the Wadai leader put Ali the young brother of the Mai on the throne. Umar, in high dudgeon, executed Ibrahim and bribed the Wadai forces to withdraw from Bornu. The young Ali and his small following were now attacked and defeated, during which encounter Ali lost his life. And so ended the dynasty of the Magumi Sefuwa of Bornu. Shehu Umar declared himself the sole ruler of Bornu and rebuilt the city of Kuka which Barth visited in the 1850's. Local tradition marks this occasion by telling how Shehu Umar was the first of the Bornu monarchs ever to sit on a chair. Before this time leaders had always sat on rugs. It is also related of him that he took a member of the royal family, Ali Mairami, who was the son of a daughter of Mai Dunama (1810-1818), (i.e. he was not in line for the succession) and made him a Maisuli or joking king, who could joke with and chastise the Shehu in a manner prohibited to anyone else. This practice is still carried on today by the descendant of Ali Mairami in the court of the Shehu at Maiduguri.

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(1) Denham, Dr. Clapperton H. Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa, 1826.

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With minor disturbances, including one by the brother of Shehu Umar, in 1854, the Bornu kingdom maintained itself in a fairly stable condition, throughout the reign of Umar, and even afterwards during the reign of his son Bukr (1880-4). However, trouble was soon to come from the east.

In the Bahr el Ghasal and Darfur region of the present independent Sudan, an adventurer named Rabeh was slave raiding under the power of the first Egyptian governor of the Bahr, named Zubeyr,(1) in the 70's and early 80's. However Zubeyr's son Stiman headed a rebellion against Egyptian authority and was defeated, and his army disbanded. A remnant of this force headed westward under Rabeh who transformed this band of freebooters and pillagers into a disciplined army which, in the late 80's under the banners of the Mahdi, terrorized the Bahr el Ghasal, conquered Wadai, and defeated the Baghirmi kingdom east of Chad. In 1893, he engaged the Bornu army near Ngala and vanquished it. Whereupon he entered a defeated Bornu and literally raped the countryside. From 1893-6, he despoiled the entire area, putting to death many of the leading figures in Bornu who opposed him, and tried to spread his conquest as far west as possible. In this latter effort he was checked by a union of western forces and refugee Kanuri at the present site of Geidam in northwest Bornu. After 1896 from his capital at Dikwa, Rabeh seems to have attempted a consolidation of the kingdom and due to these efforts at administration a more moderate policy was followed. Nevertheless, his rule is remembered in Bornu today as the blackest period of their history. Old men are still alive who tell of the pillaging, burning, slave-raiding, killing and excessive extortion of the peasants, that was carried on during the "Rabeh period."

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(1) c.f. Balfour-Paul, H.G. History and Antiquities of Darfur, Sudan Antiquities Service, Museum Pamphlet #3 Khartoum, 1955.

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436 is to say, even those peasants marketing in the capital had not accepted the use of currency in 1850. Nevertheless some levels of the society must have been using the gursu (M.T. dollars) for some time, since Denham remarks that strips of cloth used for currency could be purchased in Bornu for forty to the M.T. dollar in the 1820's.(1) The market scenes observed by both Barth and earlier by Denham in the 19th century differ only slightly from those observed anywhere in Bornu today.

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721 As far as can be inferred from available sources, warfare and slave raiding made the life of the common people one of uneasy tension. Being the serf of one chief might not prevent a nearby potentate from sending out a raiding party which might easily clear out an entire local area of its inhabitants. The criterion which directed slave raiding only upon pagans was often honoured in the breach, especially if a chief's debts were [101] pressing. Again local life was often broken up by the feudal service in war which peasants owed to their chiefs. We are told in the history of Bornu of armies of thousands and campaigns which were waged annually year [182] after year for generations. In discussing this point, Denham felt that warfare resulted in a very mobile society where fortunes rose and fell rapidly and life as an intrinsic value was not highly regarded.(2) People in towns and villages, he says, are often mercilessly attacked and plundered. Accounts tell how the inhabitants, in attempting to fly, were
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727 caught by their attackers, whereupon, in most instances, the men were killed and the women and children lashed together and taken as slaves. Military men and their followers often died in droves on campaigns, widowing all their wives and concubines at one blow.

In response to this constant warfare, villages in danger would

(1) Denham, D. and Clapperton; op. cit. p. 54
(2) Ibid; p. 135

175 In response to this constant warfare, villages in
361 danger would 29.
712 either build near hills, to which they would retire in case of attack, if they lived in the south, or hide the site in a bushy place with barricaded and camouflaged entrance paths to the town. They would often build large covered holes with spikes at the bottom to stop intruders, especially raiders on horseback. Again, many villages would construct large mud-stockaded walls for the same protective reason.

175 This pattern of constant warfare in Bornu is very old. The
721 contemporary record of the reign of Mai Idris Alooma, which has been pre-
178 served, is almost entirely an account of one military campaign after
175 another. Firearms have been used in Bornu for at least 400 years, and the
411 first request that Shehu Laminu made of the European explorers, who found
178 their way there in the 1820's, was for a cannon.(1) The interest in war-
175 fare by the leaders was reflected in the highly organized manner in which
726 warfare was conducted. Thus, before the battle witnessed by Denham, the
[701] Shehu inspected at military maneuvers of his troops. Each chief and slave commander (Kachella) had his own little "general staff" of close associates and when the order to advance on the enemy was given, each of these little "staffs" led their own groups forward. When the maneuvers were over, one of the groups was given the task for that day of watch and sentry duty for the entire camp.

173 Informants in Maiduguri recalled 24 Kachellas in pre-Rabah
701 Bornu. Each had a "regiment" of cavalry and foot-soldiers, and the army was drawn into two divisions, under twelve Kachellas per unit. The first
[644] was called the "house" force. It generally remained close to the Shehu, and its soldiers constituted a standing army or palace guard whose primary duty was the protection of the monarchy. The second division was called the "bush" unit, not because it fought outside the capital, but rather be-

(1) Ibid., p. 149.

173 701 cause its soldiers were peasant subjects and rural followers of fief holders, whose homes were not in the capital but out in the Bornu countryside. In the pre-19th century military system, each of the four regional military leaders (the Yuroma, Mustrema, Kaiguma, and Yerima) had under him a force of Kachallas, each of which in turn headed up a regiment of foot-soldiers and cavalry.

175 727 Very often a diplomatic Bornu ruler, after having defeated his enemy in battle would assess the situation and try to decide whether or not the chief of the opposing side (if Muslim) was worth keeping. If not he was executed. But very often the rebel or enemy leader was humbled, then raised up after a defeat and encouraged to become a loyal vassal of the King of Bornu.

195 643 703 726 It is also interesting to note that at least part of the morale of Shehu Laminu's army resided in the general belief in his supernatural powers as a military leader. The night before the battle witnessed by Denham it was reported that Laminu had written charms (verses from the Koran) and his enemies' spears and arrows were blunted and found so in the morning by their owners on the day of battle. Laminu was extremely anxious that Denham set off a rocket for him on the night before the battle, presumably for the same reason.

War itself was highly organized. The maintenance of the state required elaborate rituals and ceremonies to dramatize militarism, and the belief in the supernatural power of the leader or his religious associates helped maintain the morale of the army, which was also goaded on by a comprehensive system of sharing in the plunder. However, this tended to create for the average citizen an areal mobility not usually associated 175 with peasant life in Africa. A man might return from the wars to his vil- 721 lage on the borders of the state to find no village, nor wife, nor home,

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721 since the absence of the local chief with a force of young men had tempted the neighbouring chief, or some wandering nomad raiders, to plunder the town for slaves and booty.

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642 When the British arrived in Bornu to weld the Emirate into their Colonial Empire, it should be emphasized that they were confronted by a way of life, whose known and partly recorded past had been flowing on through at least 1100 years of continuous, unbroken and independent national history. During that time the power of the monarchy had risen and fallen in successive waves of power and decline. In the 12th and 13th centuries the first Kanuri florescence occurred in Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, only to decline in the 14th century and finally beat a forced retreat from the center of their empire into Bornu proper, to the west of the Lake. Here, to the south of the river Yo, they hoped for some safety from the northern raiders which was afforded by the river. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the second emergence of a Kanuri Empire in the Sudan, which, although often neglected by historians of the region, was effective enough to resist the eastward expansion of Songhai at the zenith of its power. Slow decline followed in the 17th and 18th centuries until a near collapse, due to Fulani expansionism at the beginning of the 19th century, could only be avoided by a new dynasty taking over the rule of the kingdom, which maintained itself and the kingdom until Rabeh's desecration of Bornu in 1893. However, even Rabeh was slowly beginning to reorganise the broken kingdom when the British arrived, and it is evident that the complete chaos, conventionally charged to Bornu at the beginning of the 19th century, has been over-emphasized. Forces of re-consolidation were in operation which would have kept the Bornu state in existence, albeit under a new dynasty.

It is evident from an appraisal of Kanuri history that its